

The most Important Question,

What is Truth, 5

*Explain'd and Enlarg'd upon, in two*

# SERMONS,

PREACH'D

At St. CHADD's, in *Shrewsbury*,  
November the First.

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By SAMUEL JONES, A. B.

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THE SECOND EDITION,  
Wherein is added a Title to each Page, shewing  
the Contents thereof.

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*Contemplatio Veritatis rerum omnium jucundissima est.*

August.

*Cognitio Veritatis est ad Salutem nostram admodum  
necessaria.*

Muscul.

Ἡ ἀλήθεια πάντων καὶ ἀγαθῶν θεοῖς ἡγνῆται πάντων  
ἢ ἀνθρώποις ὅς ὁ βουήσας πολλὰ μακάριος τε καὶ οὐκ αἰσίων,  
ἐξ ἀρχῆς ὄντως μέτοχος εἶη. ὡς λέγει Πλάτων.

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LUDLOW: Printed by *William Parks*, 1720.

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TO ALL

Who Love the Truth, as it is in  
CHRIST JESUS.

SIRS,

**I**N the Fourth Century, Epiphanius could reckon  
up Fourscore Heresies, or gross Errors; and that  
was then look'd upon to be no small Number.  
But alas! had he lived in our Days, he might  
easily have enlarg'd his <sup>\*</sup>Panarium.

For (not to mention the Multitude of Opinions, which he summ'd  
up the Heresies, he  
met with.  
which are held among Christians, about Modes  
of Worship, and Church Government) there is,  
it seems, no Artic'le of Faith, no Fundamental Principle in our  
Religion, so sound and sacred, as not to be struck at, or call'd  
in Question.

This Melancholy Thought did (and nothing else cou'd) move  
me to Publish the following Treatise; wherein according to my  
Talent, I have endeavour'd to inform the Ignorant, to confirm  
the Weak, and to put the Erroneous in a way  
to find out Truth for themselves, in the midst of  
all Controversies. <sup>In magnis voluisse  
est.</sup>

This I have done as fairly, and as briefly as I cou'd, leav-  
ing it to others to enlarge upon certain Points, according to their  
own Discretion. But for your further Information, I refer you  
to the Treatise itself; only I desire you to take this Notion a-  
long with you, that I have thro' the whole not Acted  
with Regard to any Party among Christians, or as a  
Mem-

## The P R E F A C E.

Member of any Particular Church; but I have acted as a Member of the Church Catholick. For the Tenor of my Text, I conceive, requir'd me to shew my self thus impartial.

Now, I know that One will with a scornful Mien look upon this, as a Treatise not worth his Perusal.

I know that another, like a true Sceptick, will carp at, and find Fault with the Words and the Phrases, if not with the Matter and Method of it.

And I know that a third, who of the three is the least able to correct, will yet prove most unjust and unmerciful to me, in his way of Criticism.

But in short let them know, that I am careless to answer 'em in these Matters; and that I make no other Apology for my self than this, that if I can (as thro' God's Grace I may) satisfie some scrupulous Persons, or convert even one Sinner from the Error of his Way, I care not if I fall under the Censure of an hundred Criticks: For I seek not my own, but God's Glory; and therefore I require you to give Him the Praise, if upon Perusing this Treatise you find your selves any thing the wiser or better; but if not, — I am willing that you lay the Blame on me,

Who am,

Your very humble Servant,

S. Jones,





T W O

# S E R M O N S,

P R E A C H ' D

*At St. Chadd's, in Shrewsbury.*

JOHN XVIII, 38.

*What is Truth?*

S E R M O N the First.



IN the Beginning of the Verse you find, that 'twas *Pilate*, who propos'd this Question; and from the Context you may gather, that it is in it self (how light soever he made of it) a Question of very great Weight and Moment; for 'tis concerning such a Truth, as Christ the Son of God came down from Heaven to propagate and establish among us.

Besides this, from your own Reason you may infer, that this is a Question of the utmost Importance; nay, you may conclude, that a full and clear Answer to it might serve, both

both to rectify the Erroneous, and to satisfy the scrupulous Consciences of Devout Persons. For all the Religious (Irreligious) Controversies, which the World now-a-days is so perplexed with, turn upon this one single Point, *What is Truth.*

Wherefore, seeing that no Answer was made directly, or seeing that 'tis not recorded, every one of us for his Part, according to the Manifestation of the Spirit, or according to the *Grace that is given him*, should study to inform himself aright of This the most Excellent Truth; and should likewise endeavour to get himself settled in it; as he would approve himself unto God, his Maker, his Redeemer, and Sanctifier.

Now that I may give you some Light into this dark Question, I propose,

First, To explain what this great Truth is in General; And

Secondly, To put you in a Way to find it out for your selves, as to all it's Particulars.

Hereupon,

Thirdly, I'll conclude with a few Words of Exhortation, and that by Way of Inference.

First, I am to explain unto you what this great Truth is in general.

By the Word Truth, in a strict Sense, is not here meant any human or common Truth, viz. such as Men use in their Conversation and Dealings with each other; or such

as the School-Men call *Logical* and *Moral* Truths; whereby they denote the Agreement of One's Words, either with the Things he treats of, or with his Thoughts concerning them, or else with both: Tho' indeed

Est veritas secundum quam homo in dictis & factis ostendit se, ut est: veritas autem vice dicitur particulariter secundum quam quis in vita sua implet iud., ad quod

ordinatur per interiectum divinum. Est et veritas Iustitiæ, secundum quam homo servat id, quod secundum ordinem legum alteri debet. *Aquin. 1. quest. 16. Art. 4.*

## Of Divine Truth in Particular.

7

indeed Christ may be said to have born Witness to these Kinds of Truth; in that he commanded us, *not to lie one to another, but to be True and Just in all our Dealings.*

However, The Word *Truth* is in my Text to be understood chiefly of a Divine, or Theological Truth; of such a great Truth, I mean, as God himself had at sundry Times, and in divers Manners *spoken unto the Fathers by the Prophets.* For the Chief

Heb. i. 1.

End of Christ's Appearance was, 'tis plain, that he shou'd bear Witness unto those most Sacred and Solemn Verities: Whence we gather, that the Truth is in General only this, *God would have all Men to be saved and to come unto the Knowledge of the Truth.*

1 Tim. ii. 4

Now, for an Unfolding of the Truth thus stated, it is to be consider'd, that even before the Fall of Mankind, God revealed himself unto our First Parents, and declared unto them; how that he was from Eternity the only True God, the Almighty Maker of Heaven and Earth, and of all Things visible and invisible: Likewise he declar'd unto them his Will concerning Mankind; how that he expected, that they, as being endu'd with Reason, shou'd upon all Occasions worship and serve him alone, without Regard to any other Object of Religion: And, to move them to behave themselves thus towards him, with Humility and Devotion, he gave them to understand, that if they obey'd his Commandments, they shou'd live and inherit the Kingdom of Heaven for ever; but that if they prov'd disobedient they shou'd die, that is, they shou'd be liable to Hellish Torments and Eternal Miseries.

Such great Truths, I conclude from the History of our Creation, were made known to *Adam* in his State of Innocency.

Gen. chap. 2.

Again after the Fall, God made known the Truth of our Redemption, saying, *That the Seed of the Woman should bruise the Head of the Ser-*

chap. 3.

pent,

pent, that Christ Jesus should be manifest in the Flesh to destroy the Works of the Devil; that he should fulfil all Righteousness in our stead; and that all who would believe in him shou'd be saved. Upon the whole, God made it known, how that he had appointed a Day, in which he wou'd judge the World in Righteousness, and that every one should receive according to his Desert, whether it be Good, or whether it be Evil.

These Divine Truths, we may suppose, were only by Tradition deliver'd from *Adam* to his Sons, and from them to their Offspring; and so from Generation to Generation for Two Thousand Years, at

The Promulgation of the Law at Mount *Sinai*, was, as it is computed, in the Year of the *Julian* Period, 3217, that is, in the Year of the World 2453. But herein, as in other Epochs, the best Chronologers differ not a little.

the least; but being thus carried from the Fountain-Head, they were by Degrees so impair'd and corrupted, that at length very few knew God their Maker, and scarce any one serv'd him aright, as thro' Faith in Christ their Redeemer.

Hereupon, God by the Hands of *Moses* and the Prophets gave his Laws, his Statutes, and his Judgments to the Israelites in Writing; and having taken them for his Peculiar People, he appointed 'em certain Rites and Ordinances, to keep them in Obedience to him, and to put them in Mind of the promis'd *Messias*. Whereas,

Deut. vii, 6.  
Ch. xiv, 2.

In the mean while, the miserable Gentiles, the Generality of Mankind, being destitute of those Helps continued in Ignorance; and so instead of Worshipping one God, according to the Ways of Truth, they Worshipped many Gods, according to the Ways of Falshood, after their Vain Imaginations, having their Understanding darkened, and being wholly Ignorant of Christ, the onely Mediator betwixt God and Men.

Nay, the Israelites themselves, tho' they had the Holy Scriptures to Guide and instruct 'em, yet thro' the Blindness



*How Christ bore Witness to the Truth.* 9

ness of their Hearts, fell again into divers Errors, and offended in many Things; for they entertain'd strange and wrong Notions of Christ our Saviour; and, not to mention their Pronsess to Idolatry, they neither Worship'd God in Sincerity, nor regarded his Laws in Simplicity; but went *a whoring with their own Inventions, and taught for Doctrines the Commandments of Men.* *Mat. xv. 3, 9.*

After this Manner for many Ages till Christ's Appearance, God's Truth was every where slighted, exploded, and as it were turn'd out of the World, having few, or no able Advocates upon Earth, among the Sons of Men, to stand up and plead for it effectually. Wherefore said Christ, *for this End was I born, and for this Cause came I into the World, that I should bear witness unto the Truth.* Read Isa. lii. 14, 15, 16, 17.

Now *Christ bore witness to the Truth*, in that he by his Gospel re-establish'd it, and brought it again into Countenance; in that he thereby rectify'd those Errors, which were spread abroad in the World; in that he turn'd the Gentiles from the Power of Darkness into Light; and in that, having convinc'd them of their superstitious Folly in Worshipping many Senseless Idols, and False Gods, he put them in the Right Way of Salvation, and brought them to the Knowledge of the Living and True God.

Likewise our Saviour may be said to have *bore Witness to the Truth*, in that he shew'd the Jews, what foolish Customs they were taken with, and how they mis-interpreted the Letter of the Law: More especially, Christ bore Witness to the Truth; in that he taught Men their several Duties, and expounded unto them the Things, which were written concerning himself; and in that he testify'd of himself, that he came from God, and that he was the very Person appointed to redeem Mankind.

This Testimony he made good by his Miracles; in that he actually fulfill'd all the Things, which were fore-



## 10 *Divers Kinds of Religions compared.*

told of him by the Prophets : As in that *he caused the Blind to see, the Deaf to hear, the Lamè to walk, and the Dead to rise to Life again, &c.* These were Matters of Fact, which he chiefly appeal'd to, saying, *Believe me for the very Work's sake.* And upon this infallible Token, he bid *John's Disciples* make their Report of him, *Whether it was he that should come, or must they look for another :* And hence after his Resurrection he affirmed, that he was the True Messias, saying to his Apostles, *Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the Dead the Third Day ; and that Repentance and Remission of Sins should be preach'd in his Name among all Nations,* Luk. xxiv, 46, 47.

John xiv. 11.

From what I have thus said in Brief, you may well infer, that by the Word *Truth* in my Text can be meant nothing else, or less then the whole Christian Religion; and also that Christianity is a Religion, not of a late Date, nor of Seventeen Hundred and Twenty Years standing only ; but it is the First of all Religions, and as old as the World it self, being instituted by Christ in the Beginning, and being published in these last Days, by the Preaching of his Gospel, *According to the Revelation of the Mystery, which was kept Secret since the World began ; but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the Prophets, according to the Commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all Nations for the Obedience of Faith,* Rom. xvi, 25, 26. Read 1 John ii, 7.

Christianorum Religio non est nuper exorta, sed est prima omnium ; atque ex ipsa simul mundi origine ac nativitate descendens, eodem Christo Deo rectore ac institutore, jam inde ab initio speciem formamque suscipiens. Eusebii Di8.

Now, that Christianity, as it is contain'd both in the Old and New Testament, is the Truth, or the only true Religion, I shall briefly prove, by comparing it with some other Religions that have been, or are still in Vogue ; as with Paganism, Judaism, and Mahometism.

But

## Paganism not the Truth. Judaism imperfect. II

But first to make the Comparison without Partiality, I lay down this for a Theorem or Standard of Truth. Namely that,

*The Religion which seems Consonant to the Law of Nature, and is most agreeable to Right Reason, which teacheth Men every where to acknowledge one God, and to serve him on all Occasions, not after an Absurd, Loose, and Superstitious Manner, nor for sensual and worldly Ends, but in a Godly Sincerity, and for pure spiritual and Heavenly Joys, is so far (I humbly conceive) a true Religion; and that which is the Reverse of it, I am sure, must by all serious Persons be lookt upon as a false Religion.*

Hence therefore I proceed to try, how the Religions aforesaid agree or disagree with this Standard, And

First, I shall enquire into Paganism; under which Name I would be understood to comprehend all the different sorts of Idolatry, which were in Use among Pagans or Heathens: Now upon Enquiry I find, that these and the like Religions (if they may at the best be so called) were altogether Gross and Irrational. *For in them the Glory of the Incorruptible God was changed into an Image, made like to corruptible Man, and to Birds and Four Footed Beasts, and Creeping Things, Rom. i, 23. Moreover,*

From their own Poets I gather, that not only the Objects of their Devotion were disagreeable to Truth, and dishonourable to the Great God of Heaven and Earth; but also that their Ways of Worship and Service were so too: For generally speaking, their Rites and Ceremonies were performed either after an Inhuman and Unnatural, or after a Childish, Wanton and Obscene Manner; in-  
*so much as they Worshipped and serv'd their Lusts, more than their Idols, which they called Gods.*

Secondly, As for the Jewish Religion: This, 'tis to be confess'd, was in the Main the True Religion, even whilst the *Mosaical Oeconomy* lasted; but afterwards upon the Gospel-Dispensation, it's Sacrifices were out of

Date, and it's Sacraments were abolished, for they served only to lead Men to Christ, or they were but Types to signify his coming, and therefore cou'd be of no Use, when he the Antitype was come. To this Effect, St. Paul proves the Weakness of all such Rites and Ceremonies, saying, *The Law having a Shadow of good Things to come, and not the very Image of the Things, can never with those Sacrifices, (which they, the Jews, offer'd Year by Year continually,) make the Comers thereunto perfect: For 'tis not possible that the Blood of Bulls and Goats should take away Sins.*

Such, as the Case now stands, is the Imperfection of Judaism. And

*Thirdly*, As for Mahometism, which at this day overspreads a great (if not the greatest) Part of the whole Earth: This is in many things so disagreeable to Reason, that it tends rather to Vice and Uncleaness, than to Virtue and Holiness: For tho' in it, as in Judaism, Men are taught to acknowledge the True God their Maker; yet they are taught to Worship him after such a Superstitious Manner, with Regard to the Impostor *Mahomet*, as the Lord, who is a jealous God, can never approve of: And also they are taught to serve him for such carnal and sensual Rewards, as a most Holy God cannot be supposed, to gratifie Men with in the Kingdom of Heaven. But now,

Christianity is liable to none of these Exceptions; for it doth not (with Paganism) favour any thing of Idolatry, or of Ungodly and Wordly Lusts: Neither doth it (with Judaism) by any Means set Men in a Way to insist upon outward Forms of Worship, or upon *Sacrifices and beggarly Elements*: Nor yet doth it (like Mahometism) comply with the corrupt Humours of Mankind, and buoy up its Votaries with the Thoughts of any carnal Pleasure in a World to come.

No! the Christian Religion contains nothing of such base Principles and absurd Doctrines; but all its Articles,

## Christianity the only true Religion. 13

cles, Precepts, and Promises, are consonant to the Law of Nature, and so most agreeable to right Reason.

As 1<sup>st</sup> for its Articles:

If we seriously consult our own Breasts, 'tis a Thought, we find, most natural to us, to believe that there is a God, and that he is Almighty, All-Just, and All-Gracious. And is it not reasonable for Men to believe, since God himself, who cannot lie, hath said it, *That there are three Persons in the Godhead?* and that as they concurred in making the World, so 'tis the Office of the Father to preserve all the Creatures therein contained; of the Son to redeem Mankind; and of the Holy Ghost to sanctifie the Elect People of God? Again,

As for the Rules and Precepts of Christianity: These are in themselves, Holy, Just and Good, for they tend only to Sobriety, Righteousness and Godliness, and to all such Virtues and Graces, as an Holy God might well enjoin, and as rational Men should, purely of their own accord, comply with; were there no future Rewards to engage 'em.

Lastly: As for the Gospel-Promises: These are we find suitable both to Faith and Reason, in that they relate, not to carnal and sensual Pleasures, but to such pure and spiritual Joys, as do become a God to give, and the Spirits of just Men to receive and enjoy in his special Presence. *Why then should it be thought an Incredible Thing, that the God in whose Hands are the Ways of Life, should raise the Dead, and reward his Faithful Children with that Eternal Happiness, which is mentioned in the Gospel?*

Thus in Brief 'tis evident, that Christianity above all other Religions, is the Truth, or the True Religion.

But, tho' Christianity be the Truth in general, yet more particularly it may here be question'd, *What is Truth?* Or where lies it in the Christian Religion?

Sic, ut ait Musculus, in Veritate omnis nostrae Religionis puritas et certitudo consistit, per quam a calumnia falsi assertitur, et ab omnibus aliis arbitrariis, ac falsis Religionibus separatur.

Seeing



Seeing that there are so many Sects among Christians, as of Papists, and Protestants; of Anabaptists and Quakers; of Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Independents: All which different Sects claim Truth to their several Parties; and at the same Time either pity, or condemn each other for Error and Falshood. Moreover,

Seeing that there are Controversies, not only betwixt Sects, but also betwixt Persons of every one Sect, who again, making a Noise about Truth, put off their own Tenets with plausible Arguments, and expose those of their Opponents, either as false and schismatical Doctrines, or as pernicious and damnable Heresies.

For this the Papists are most remarkable, and indeed, generally speaking, all Sects and Persons among us have so much of the old Leaven (the Leaven of Popery in them) that they think themselves infallibly in the Right, and all, who are otherwise minded, in the Wrong. But — As to these Differences and Controversies, I answer That, tho' they often prove a Stumbling-block of Offence to weak and scrupulous Consciences; and tho' they very much perplex devout and heavenly minded Souls; yet they can't be said either to prejudice the Truth it-self, or to injure the Cause of Christianity, if it be consider'd, that none of 'em are about the Holy Scriptures themselves; for all Parties and Persons among us allow these Writings to be the Rule of Faith, and the Standard of Divine Truth; but all the Quarrels and Disputes are about the Comments and Glosses, which Men put upon them: And so 'tis no more a Wonder, that Divines should differ in mysterious Points of Divinity, than that Lawyers should differ in nice Points of Law; or Physicians in those of Physick: For considering our different Qualifications and Abilities, our different Aims and Interests, it may well be expected, that when Men attempt to make Expositions for themselves, some out of Pride or Self-Ends should advance one thing,

## No Objection against the Truth of Christianity. 15

thing, and that others should advance the contrary, even out of a Spirit of Contradiction. And indeed it cannot be, but that when silly Men presume to pry into the secret Decrees of the All-wise God, and think to fathom the deep Mysteries of Religion, they should be guilty of divers Errors, and sever'd from each other, in the wild Mazes of Ignorance.

But yet, a devout Person need not be offended at these things, he need not be troubled at the various Opinions which he meets with among Christians, if he considers farther, that even Heresies may, (and do oftentimes) serve to confirm the Truth it-self: For when one Heretick doth (as *Manichæus* did) affirm Christ to be God only, because of his Divine Miracles; and when another (as *Photinus* did) suggests that he was a meer Man, because of his human Infirmities; both their Arguments, in themselves Heretical, joyntly prove the very Truth, giving it in Evidence, that Christ is Θεὸς καὶ ἄνθρωπος, God and Man, in one Person. Hence,

To satisfy the scrupulous, I might easily prove, that Schisms and Divisions come, not only from the perverse Disputings of worldly Wise-Men, but also by the Permission and Counsel of God himself. But, Read 1 Cor. 11. 19.

To keep to the Propositions laid down, I proceed, as I propos'd,

Secondly, To put you in a Way to find out the particular Truths, which are contained in this general Truth, the Christian Religion.

In the first Place you are not to think highly of yourselves, of your Learning and Knowledge, as if you had already attained, or were already perfect in it; but you are to suppress Self-Conceit, Presumption, and

*The Conclusion of the first Sermon is here omitted, and some Heads of it are added to the Conclusion of the other Sermon, for Brevity sake, and that both might be read as one Treatise.*

and all the fond Notions, which you were possess'd with: For, as a learned Nobleman of our own well observed, *preconceiv'd Opinions do not only (as sophisticate in themselves) basely counterfeit the Truth; but also block up the Avenues, that lead to it.*

*Perperam enim præconceptæ opiniones, non solum, tanquam perfidæ et adulteratæ in se ipsis, verum mentionur, sed et omni juxta veritati obstruunt viam.*

*Ange vestibulum igitur, ne dicam in Apodyterio, scruta, scilicet opiniones exant, adyta veritatis ingresluri. Herb. de Veritate p. 13. & 319.*

Wherefore, as you hope by seeking to find out Truth in its Native Purity, and to Perfection, you should instantly lay aside such obnoxious Opinions; & likewise you should *put off, concerning your former Conversation the Old Man*; I mean you should put off your Vicious Habits, and utterly forsake all sinful courses: For Men of corrupt Minds, receive not the Love of the Truth; but are thro' their deceitful lusts so incapable of it, that *tho' they should be ever learning, yet they should never be able to come to the Knowledge of it,* 2 Tim, 3.

Having thus laid aside your prejudices and preconceived Opinions,

In the next Place, to dispose yourselves for the Truth, you are to think soberly of your selves; you are to be meek and lowly in Heart, and you are to shew your selves humble in your Words and Actions: In short, you should be of a quiet Spirit, and you should be Holy in all Manner of Conversation: For, as St. James hath it, *The Wisdom that is from above is first* Ch. iii, 17. *Pure, then Peaceable, full of Mercy, and good Fruits, without Partiality, and without Hypocrisie.* Therefore, I say, if you would compass such Heavenly Wisdom, you must endeavour to be like it, as by exercising your selves unto all Christian Graces and Virtues. Hence,

*Thirdly.* Being thus disposed, you are to pray unto God fervently, that it would please him to illuminate your Understanding, and to guide you into all Truth, by the the assistance of his Holy Spirit. Hereupon you are

## Pure Love of Truth, a necessary Qualification. 17

to Co-operate with the Divine Grace, and to use your best endeavours to get your selves Masters of the Truth: You are to *seek it as Silver, and to search for it, as for hid Treasures*: You are to seek it diligently, and to search for it earnestly; as those who have hopes of finding it, as those, who would prize it above all things; and as those, who would do any thing for it, or who would hearken to any Body, that cou'd direct, and lead 'em to it. But

*Fourthly*, Being thus zealously affected for the Truth, you should take heed to your Waies, Read Coloss. ii, 8. how you follow others: For you are 1 Jo. iv, 1 not to give your selves up to the Private Opinion of any Man, how Great and Learned soever. You are neither to embrace such and such a Tenet for a Truth, because 'tis set forth under some specious Name, or because it is defended by one, whom you highly esteem for somewhat else. Nor yet should you reject such a Thing, as an Error, because you mislike it's Title, or despise the Person, who broach'd it: But you are either to embrace the one, or to reject the other for Truth's sake, according to what they are found to be in themselves: I mean, that if you would not deceive your selves, nor be imposed upon by others with any false Notions, you should enquire fairly and impartially into Propositions, without regard to Persons, who offer them to your Consideration. For Truth is to be embrac'd at all Times, and Error is to be rejected, let it come from whomsoever you will.

Ἰουκῶν καὶ ἐπὶ  
λόγῳ ἐκ ἀρετῆς τοῦ  
λεχθῆναι, ἀλλ' ἀ-  
νάγκη δικαιοσύνης  
καὶ ἡμετέρας, καὶ  
δικαιοσύνης τῆς ἀ-  
ληθείας καὶ τῆς ἀδελφείας;  
ἀνάγκη. Artian.  
Epicl. p. 102.

C

And

The Rule for the availing of Error, which respects the Sciences, is this: A Man should never give an entire consent, but only to Propositions, which appear so evidently true, that he cannot deny it them without feeling an internal Pain, and the secret upbraidings of his Reason. Said the ingenious *Malebranch*. And to this effect said the no less Ingenious Mr. *Lock*. The not entering into any Proposition with greater assurance than the Proofs, it is built upon, will warrant, is an unerring Mark, that one is a Lover of Truth. Whoever goes beyond this measure of Assent, it is plain, loves not Truth for Truth's sake, but for some other By-End.



And, as you should in Matters of Religion not give your selves up to the Opinions of certain Men, so you should not addict your selves to Parties. For you are not to pitch upon, or to take up with any Sect among Christians; because it's peculiar Tenets are most suitable to your Temper, to your Life, Calling and Conversation. Nor yet are you to continue in a Religion, because it is the Religion of your Country, or of your Family: Not but that this may be in all respects the most pure and true Religion; as Ours no doubt is, as to all the Essentials of it, it's Sacraments, Doctrines, and Articles. But yet speaking as to an Impartial Inquiry, I say, we are not to suppose the Articles even of our own Church to be true, because we profess'd 'em from our Youth up; but because they are, we find, consonant to, and agreeable with the Holy Scriptures; which, without controversie, are the Chief Rule or Standard of all Divine Truths.

Wherefore, *Fifthly*, and chiefly, to find out the Truth in every particular, you are to search the Writings of the Old and New Testament; you are to read them not carelessly as the Word of Men, nor with a Base Design to play the Critick on them, nor yet *with an intention to add unto, or to diminish ought from them*: For you may as well make to yourselves a New Bible, or a New Alchoran, after the Example of *Mahomet* and *Sergius*; as go about to wrest the sacred Text, to make it speak your Thoughts, or to your Purpose. But if you would find the Truth, *as it is in Christ Jesus*, you are to look upon his Gospel as the Word, the very Word of God; you are to take it in Hand with Reverence and Humility, as the Word, by which you shall be judged at the last: And you are to read, or to hear it read with Attention; as those who truly desire to be inform'd by it: And, for your information, you should always take the Texts in their most genuine Sense; and also you should endeavour to explain the difficult by those which are more easy to be understood, taking

king care to *compare Spiritual Things with spiritual*. Hence,

When any Questions are started, or when Points of Religion are proposed to you for Articles of Belief, you like the Noble Bereans should search the Scriptures, whether those things are so; you should enquire whether they are therein expressed, or whether they may be thence deduced by fair Consequences: And if you find that they cannot be proved by these means; then, however they are set off for Truths by Worldly Wisdom, you are not bound to believe 'em, as necessary to your Salvation. But on the other hand, if the Points in Question be either clearly expressed, or fully implied in your Bible; then, however they seem contrary to, or above your Reason, you, as you would shew your selves Christians, are bound to believe 'em. As for instances,

'Tis proposed to you for an Article of your Belief, *that God was manifest in the Flesh*, and this Mystery, without doubt, you cannot by your Reason comprehend; but yet seeing that it is expressly related in Scripture, you are bound to take it for such an undoubted Truth, that you might confidently say for yourselves with St. John, *We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is True: and we are in him that is True, even in his Son Jesus Christ.* **THIS IS THE TRUE GOD.** And,

As concerning Christ's Divinity, so concerning his Union with the Father; likewise concerning the Holy Ghost, and the Trinity in Unity, there are Articles of Faith made, which men indeed cannot account for: But since 'tis written in the Gospel, *that Christ and the Father are one.* And in the First Epistle of St. John, *that there are three, who bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word or Son, and the Holy Ghost: and these Three are One.* Since

these things, I say, are so, and since they may be prov'd from several Texts of Scripture, you (notwithstanding all

1 Jo. v, 20.

John x, 30.

Ch. v. v. 7.

scru-

Scruples raised to the contrary) should take 'em for precious and certain Truths.

But herein you are to beware, lest you confound the Persons, or divide the Substance; and so fall from the Truth into One of the extreme Errors. For Truth, you must know, is the middle between two Extremes; and Heresies, as the good old *Vigilius* said, are so tempered, that Men generally to avoid One fall into another.

*Hereses ita sunt temperatae, ut plerique dum unam laudant, in alteram incidunt: Dum enim Nestorii periculum quis damnat, Eutychetis putatur errori succumbere.*

For whilst a Man speaks against dividing Christ's individual Person, which was the *Nestorian* Error, he seems to confound his Human with his Divine Nature, and this was the Error of *Eutyches*. And so they, who condemn'd *Sabellius*, that wou'd have God, the Father and Son, to be but

one Person, under a twofold Appellation, seem'd to side with, and to patronize *Arius*, who wou'd have our Saviour to be essentially, as well as personally, distinct from God the Father. But to proceed where I left off,

As these fundamental Truths of Christianity are to be found out by Scripture; so are other Theological Truths: I mean, all those, which purely relate to Godliness, and are comprehended in the First Table of the Ten Commandments. Moreover, as you come to know the Truth, so by that means you may detect Error. As the Doctrine of those, who hold that Men are saved by their Works; or of those who extol Free Grace too highly, and hold that Men are saved by Faith without Works: These contrary Tenents, I say, you may at once perceive to be erroneous, in that by Scripture it appears, that good Works, and a saving Faith must always go together. Furthermore,

As you may detect Errors, such as these, from Christian Truths; so likewise may you distinguish all Moral Truths by Scripture from those Errors, which otherwise you are liable unto; forasmuch as in Ethicks every Virtue is, as it were, placed betwixt two Vices; and foras-  
much

*Motives to stir up Christians to seek Truth.* 21

much as many Vices do resemble the contrary Virtues. I might give you an instance in Prodigality and Covetousness, which are the Extremes of Liberality: Again in Frugality and Avarice; or in Prudence and Sophistry, which have some Affinity with each other; and therefore are to be distinguish'd, and rectified by the Rules laid down in the Gospel.

But I hasten, as I promised,

Thirdly, to conclude with a few Words of Exhortation, and that by Way of Inference and Encouragement.

I have declar'd unto you, how that the Truth is in general Terms to be taken for the Christian Religion; and how that in this great Truth many particular Truths are contained, relating both to the Being and Attributes of God, and to the State and Condition of Mankind.

Moreover, I gave you to understand, how that these with all Truths, necessary to Salvation, are comprehended in the Holy Scriptures; and likewise I endeavour'd to put you in a Way-of finding them therein for yourselves. Now,

That I may prevail with you to bestir yourselves in the Search of Truth, 'Tis to be consider'd, that whereas Jews and Mahometans are brought up in the Ways of Error; and whereas Pagans *sit in Darkeness, and in the Shadow of Death*; you, blessed be God, are in the Right Way; *you have a Light to guide your Feet into the Paths of Peace*, and may certainly find out Truth, as far as it is needful for you; if you seek it with the whole Heart: *Yea, if you cry after Knowledge, and lift up your Voice for Understanding: Then shall you understand the Fear of the Lord, and find the Knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth Wisdom: Out of his Mouth cometh Knowledge and Understanding.* Likewise,

'Tis to be consider'd, that Truth here, as it stands for, or as it relates unto Religion, is the Beginning of Wisdom, and

Read Dent. ch. xxx.  
ver. xi, xii, xiii, xiv.

Prov. i. 3, 5, 6.



## 22 The Excellency and Usefulness of Truth.

Ἡ Ἀλήθεια  
μὲν τῆς γ. ω-  
σὺν τῇ ἀφ' ἧς  
τ' ἐστὶν ἡς.

and the Foundation of all Graces ; nay, 'tis the Sum or Platform of all Things, that are to be known, believ'd, or perform'd by us, as we are rational Creatures, and profess'd Christians ; for it is absolutely necessary to a saving Faith, to the right Performance of Duties, to every good Work, and to the great End of all, your Salvation.

Nay, farther, 'tis to be consider'd, that Truth is of greater Power and Efficacy than all Virtues: For every Virtue stands only in some Stead against the Vice, which is opposite to it. As Humility may help to bring down Pride; Chastity may keep a Man from Whoredom ; and the Virtue of Abstinence may keep one from Luxury, &c. But the Truth itself, if you have it to Perfection, will not only make you free from Pride, Whoredom, and Luxury ; but also it will shield you from all domineering Lusts or Passions ; nay further, it will furnish you with Love, Joy, Peace, and with pure Affections. So that, *Happy is the Man, that findeth wisdom, and the Man that getteth understanding. For the Merchandise of it is better than the Merchandise of Silver ; and the Gain thereof than fine Gold, she is more precious than Rubies, and all the things you can desire, are not to be compa'd unto her.*

Upon these Considerations, I exhort you to set your Hearts and Souls to seek the Truth : Enquire most diligently for it, till you have found it out, as far as 'tis necessary to be known : Spare no Labour, Pains, nor Charges to procure this Jewel of great Price; but desire it above all things, and to use Solomons Phrase, *buy the Truth.* But yet, Be slow to hearken unto those Merchants, who cry up Truth to sell it ; and agree not with them rashly for it ; but *to the Law and to the Testimony ; considering, if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no Light in them;* and therefore you ought in no wise to give

Mat. viii. 20.

Read Gal. i. 8.

1 Tim. vi. 3, 4, 5.

Rom. xvi. 17.

your Consent to their Doctrines. But on the other Hand, if what they speak be agreeable to God's Law, 'tis a Sign there is some Light in them; and thereupon, as they *rightly divide the Word of Truth*, you are bound to receive their Tenets; if you would prove your selves faithful and obedient Christians. However,

Lest Falshood be impos'd upon you for Truth, and lest proud, or Self-conceited Men cause you to wander out of the right Way, be cautious in your Goings, and keep at all Times, as nigh as you can, to the Holy Scriptures: For 'tis probable, that human Writings, or that Men by fair Speeches may deceive you; but 'tis certain, that unless you first deceive your own Hearts, the inspir'd Writings will not fail you in your spiritual Concerns. To this effect One well exhorted, saying: *Believe the Scripture to be the Word of God, use your true Endeavour to find the true Sense of it, and to live according*

Channingworth  
c. 5. Sect. 53.

*to it, and then you may rest securely, that you are in the true Way to eternal Happiness.* Meditate therefore therein Day and Night: Particularly, strive to know what God is, and how he is to be worshipped: Study to know the State of Mankind, what it is by Nature, and what by Grace: Hence inquire farther into Christ's Merits, and study to know him crucified, and the Power of his Resurrection. Besides this, Get some certain Knowledge of the Doctrines concerning the Immortality of your Souls, and concerning the Resurrection of your dead Bodies; as also concerning those Rewards, which (this short Life ended) you are to receive in another unalterable State of Existence. Again,

I exhort you to mark such like Principles of Christianity, and to digest them inwardly; so as to make them your own, or so as to be ready always to give

*an Answer to every Man, that asketh you a Reason of your Hope; in Meekness instructing those, that oppose themselves: If God perad-*

1 Pet. iii. 15.  
2 Tim. ii. 25.  
Jud. xxii. 23.

*venture will give them Repentance to the acknowledging of the Truth.*

And

Upon the whole.

Be not only diligent to get Truth, but also be careful to keep it, when gotten; and see that you act in every particular according to it: See that, as you know God to be a Spirit, *you retain God in your Knowledge, and worship him in Spirit, and in Truth.* As you know Christ died for your Sins, and rose again for your Justification, *see that you live unto him in Newness of Life, continually mortifying your corrupt Affections.* And, as you know, that the Holy Ghost is your Sanctifier, *see that you daily proceed in all Virtue and Godliness of Living.*

Likewise, As you know, that there is one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, have Compassion on each other, as Members of the same mystical Body, and *endeavour to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.* In short,

Read 1 Cor. i. 10.

Exercise your selves thro' the whole Course of your Lives unto all Christian Virtues, as you come to the Knowledge of them; for by that Means you may both increase Knowledge, and make your selves perfect in the Truth. To this Effect Christ promis'd, saying, *If ye continue in my Word, then are ye my Disciples indeed. And ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free.*

Having on therefore the Breast-plate of Righteousness, and having your Loins girt about with Truth, part not with it in any wise, for Fear, Favour or Affection; but contend strenuously for it at all Times, and against all it's Opposers: *That ye henceforth be no more Children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine, by the Sleight of Men, and cunning Craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive: But speaking the Truth in Love, may come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ; To whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, (three Persons, but one God) be Glory in the Church; as it was in the Beginning, is now, and ever shall be, World without End, Amen.*

